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Research Agencies from Japan and California Announce International Collaboration to Advance Stem Cell Research toward Cures

TOKYO, Japan., November 18, 2008—The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), the state's stem cell agency, and the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) announced today an international collaboration on stem cell research.

The agreement was signed earlier today by JST President Koichi Kitazawa and California Institute for CIRM President Alan Trounson at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo.

"This partnership will bring together some of the best minds in the world to find new therapies and cures that could save lives," said Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. "By working together, these scientists and doctors are providing hope to the millions of people who suffer from deadly and debilitating diseases. The discoveries this collaboration will contribute to will have a great impact for generations to come."

CIRM and the JST are laying the foundation for joint Japan-California research to advance stem cell therapies for treatment of some of today's most debilitating diseases. The agreement will make it easier for researchers in California and Japan to obtain joint funding to broaden the potential pool of expertise that can be applied toward research in a specific area of regenerative medicine. It will also encourage collaboration by developing scientific seminars and conferences and in fostering exchange programs.

"CIRM's mission requires us to accelerate the field of stem cell research as a whole and in some instances we can do this more effectively through collaborations that involve the best scientific endeavors, regardless of geography" said Dr.AlanTrounson, president of CIRM. "The linking of Californian and Japanese research excellence in stem cells is a major step forward in our aspirations to find new medical therapies for a wide range of serious diseases and injuries."

"In order to link research on stem cells with the practical application of regenerative medicine for the good of human beings as soon as possible, international cooperation is crucially important," said Dr. Koichi Kitazawa, President of JST. "For this reason, JST wishes to actively cooperate with CIRM going forward."

"This agreement will widen the already robust pipeline for collaboration between scientists in California and Japan," stated CIRM chairman Klein. "These alliances were greatly strengthened in the past year when Dr. Shinya Yamanaka of the Kyoto University agreed to accept a part time appointment at the Gladstone Institutes in San Francisco. CIRM is grateful to Dr. Yamanka for acting as an intermediary in this agreement."

In June, CIRM announced similar agreements with the Cancer Stem Cell Consortium of Canada and the State of Victoria in Australia, and announced a third agreement with the United Kingdom's Medical Research Council last month .

About CIRM CIRM was established in 2005 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided $3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. To date, the CIRM governing board has approved 229 research and facility grants totaling more than $614 million, making CIRM the largest source of funding for human embryonic stem cell research in the world. For more information, please visit www.cirm.ca.gov.

About the JST Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) aims to establish Japan as a nation built on the creativity of science and technology, as a core organization for implementing Japan's science and technology policy in line with the objectives of the Science and Technology Basic Plan. JST promotes many research projects, and one of its outcomes was iPS cells by Professor Shinya Yamanaka (Director of Center for iPS Research and Application / Professor of Institute for Frontier Medical Sciences, Kyoto University).